

The Few and Far Between

*The Motivating Factors that Lead American Undergraduates
to Study Abroad*

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Abstract

The main focus of this thesis is to shed light on the motivating factors that lead American undergraduate student to study abroad, specifically short term sojourns lasting one semester. Original interviews were conducted with ten students who had recently returned from an experience of studying abroad. Two different types of students were identified: the solo sojourner and the group sojourner. Although differing in the types of programs in which they participated, the times when they decided to go abroad and the ways in which they were influenced, these two groups of students possess similarities in their motivations. These students were driven by consumption motives in that they expressed desires to seek newness in new people, place and cultures. They also possessed investment motivations and were seeking opportunities for personal growth. Language learning and professional motives were secondary or nonexistent for the majority of the participants.

This paper also presents the current state of study abroad in America outlining the profile of the types of students who currently participate as well as ways to conceptualize students. The paper concludes with reflections on study abroad, proposing the types of students who go abroad and their aims. These characteristics and the participation in study abroad will most probably continue to change as access to international education widens.

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Preface

The summer, between the sophomore and junior years, while working on my undergraduate degree, I did something very few American college students do; I studied abroad. Even though this was my first trip outside of America, I embraced the opportunity and left without hesitation to spend three months in London participating in an internship program. The time I spent abroad proved to be a very poignant time in my life. In one short summer, my opinions, thoughts, views and perceptions of the world changed.

After returning to the U.S. after my summer abroad, my personal and professional path shifted into an unforeseen direction. Ultimately, the short time I spent abroad led me to continue to seek international experiences and to an interest to work within the field of higher education. So, here I am now, a broadcasting major from Kentucky, working as a Master graduate student at the University of Oslo on a degree in Philosophy of Higher Education. This unlikely path is the product of a fundamental change often experienced by American students after an international sojourn. Study abroad is a life-altering, eye-opening experience of which every college student should have the opportunity to take advantage.

Upon my return to the U.S. with a recently discovered worldly view, I began to realize many Americans live wearing blinders. These blinders dangerously shield them from the rest of the world with the perception that the U.S. is the only place that matters or even exists. Since my first experience abroad, I have continued to work to help remove the “blinders” of American college students by sharing my story and attempting to motivate them to study abroad.

Personally aware of the benefits, it is difficult to understand why so few Americans participate. Understandably, there are many barriers to overcome and these will be presented in chapter one. However, my main interest is in the students who *do* study abroad. What motivates them? Who influences them? What separates them from the vast majority of students who choose not to go? This study is part of my journey to continue to encourage students to temporarily leave America for an educational adventure overseas. I believe it is vital for the future of the United States to learn how to better

communicate and interact with the countries of our world. I believe the best way to do this is to get Americans out of America and to study abroad. This experience of studying abroad provides the perfect opportunity.

Those who have studied abroad can serve as great resources when attempting to learn more about international study mobility as a phenomenon. It was important for me to conduct original research not only to gain new insight into students who participated in study abroad but this also served as part of an overall learning experience for me. This project was to be completed within a four-month timeframe. Working against the clock, time limited the depth and scope of the research conducted. It was a priority to finish within the given timeframe and it proved to be one of the biggest challenges throughout the process. With that said, I feel I was able to accomplish my goals and I believe this project reveals a fresh perspective on studying abroad. It also shows how participation in study abroad has relevance today.

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1 Introduction

The United States of America is the number one destination for international students seeking higher education. According to Open Doors¹ (2006), the U.S. currently welcomes twenty-two percent of the world's estimated 2.5 million mobile students. Around the globe, international student mobility is gaining popularity with increases in student participation every year. Students from the United States are no exception. Even with concerns of terrorism and travel safety increasing immensely since the events of 9-11, growing numbers of students travel overseas for an international experience. In the year 1994 alone, there was an increase of eight percent in student participation in study abroad programs (Open Doors, 2006).

The news of growth is positive but the reality of outbound mobility of American students in actual numbers is extremely low. When considering international education in terms of an exchange between countries, the U.S. welcomes just over a half a million international students each year but sends approximately 200,000 American's abroad (Open Doors, 2006). India, China, Korea, Japan and Canada are the top five sending countries. Also falling within the highest ranked twenty-five countries for outbound mobility are the U.K., Germany and France. Not making the list, the U.S. sends only 1.4 percent² of its college students abroad each year (Atlas of Student Mobility, 2004).

By a unanimous vote, the U.S. Senate declared 2006 as the "year of study abroad" with the goal of boosting visibility of study abroad and the intent to set the stage for further action on the national level to expand opportunities. Long-term goals for this initiative are to encourage no fewer than one million U.S. students to study abroad within ten years of the passage of this bill. If this aggressive goal comes to fruition, participants

¹ Open Doors 2006 is a report on international student exchange conducted by the Institute of International Education. It is partially supported by the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of State. The data was released in November of 2006 and can be found online at: <http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/>.

² This estimate does not include students who directly enrol in foreign institutions who do not receive credit towards a degree in an American Institution.

in study abroad would represent fifty percent of the number of degrees awarded. The “year of study abroad” serves as the establishment of the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program, which will assist in funding study abroad experiences for students that reflect the demographics of the undergraduate population; ensures an increasing portion of study abroad takes place in nontraditional destinations; and, is accessible by students of diverse types of institutions (Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Fellowship for Study Abroad, 2005).

What motivates this small segment of students to pack their bags and engage in an international education experience? In *The State and Future of Study Abroad in the United States*, a briefing book prepared by the Lincoln Fellowships Advisory council for the members of the bipartisan Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Fellowships for Study Abroad³, presents the belief:

“The growth in the number of U.S. students studying abroad demonstrates that U.S. college and university students and their parents increasingly value a study abroad experience as a crucial part of their education. As they enter the 21st century workforce, students and their parents realize that hands-on knowledge of other nations, cultures, and languages will be essential tools not only for professionals operating in a global marketplace, but for an educated citizenry.”
(Lincoln Fellowship Advisory Council, 2004, E-1).

Is this the case? Do students study abroad because they believe it will help them in their professional life within the global marketplace? Do they have professional motivations or are there other factors that play a role in the decision making process?

A desire to vastly increase the study abroad capacity and participation in America has been expressed by U.S. policymakers. If there is to be an increase in the number of Americans who study abroad, an understanding of *why* students make the decision to study abroad should be realized. This information could be used to motivate others to participate. In other words, in order to increase outward mobility, we need to understand what leads students to study abroad in the first place. There is a commonly accepted

³ The Bipartisan Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship was created on January 22, 2004 with the passing of Bill (HR 2673, Section 104) establishing a seventeen member commission to create and recommend a program to greatly expand the opportunities for students and institutions of higher education to study abroad with emphasis for this study to occur in developing nations.

belief that study abroad affords benefits to individuals. These benefits are often the rationale used by educators, policymakers and politicians who feel that it is important for students to engage in international mobility. But, are these reasons why students actually study abroad? The goal of this project is to shed light onto this topic from the decision maker's perspective, the student. Motivation, as a concept, will be defined in the same way as Murphy-Lejeune (2002, 81) defines it:

"The study of motivations should be understood not only as the elements which precede a given decision and course of action, but as an engine driving actions in a continuous motion and marking each individual trajectory in a different way."

The aim of this project has been to gain insight into the world and minds of students who seek international educational experiences in the form of a semester long sojourn. A focus on this type of sojourn has been made since it offers what I believe to be the greatest area for growth in terms of student participation. The short-term approach has the ability to accommodate larger numbers of students as well as different types of students. A short sojourn can open doors for students by serving as an introductory to further international experiences. Students who study abroad for a year or more could be assumed to possess different motivations since the aim of their time abroad most likely differs from those who participate in shorter sojourns. In order to increase the capacity of study abroad, an understanding of student motivations must be clear. There are so few who make an international experience part of their college degree; those who do go abroad are unique and can offer insight on how to encourage others.

The main research question for this project is:

What are the main motivating factors that lead American undergraduate students to participate in study abroad?

There are other important factors to be investigated about study abroad. What types of students participate in study abroad? What do they study? How old are they? What countries do they visit? Who influenced their decisions? What is their family background? What experience do they have with mobility? In order to answer these questions existing literature as well as personally collected data will be used. Interviews with ten American undergraduate students who had recently participated and returned from a semester abroad were conducted in January of 2007. Through the interview

process, students acknowledged motivations and influences in their decision-making process. It was my job as the interviewer to delve into underlying issues such as their backgrounds, upbringing or other family situations that may have been contributing factors of which the students were unaware. The readers will note a common thread that runs through the characteristics of the students, although those who were selected to participate differ greatly in terms of their socioeconomic backgrounds, majors of study and interests.

This paper is structured to first present the current state of study abroad in America. This introductory chapter is mainly descriptive including a profile of students who participate in study abroad as well as the benefits and barriers of this practice. Methodological considerations and the theoretical framework guiding this study will be outlined in chapter three. The fourth chapter presents and analyses the data that was collected. The paper concludes with recommendations for students, families, higher education institutions, and policymakers to motivate more students to consider study abroad and to ultimately increase participation.

2 Study Abroad in America

2.1 Defining Study Abroad

Before moving further, a definition of study abroad should be presented in order to create a common understanding of the topic. The term ‘study abroad’ is used in several different ways and carries different meanings for different people. In general, the term study abroad can refer to any form of educational experience that takes place outside of the borders of a given country. A student could study abroad for a semester, a year or even for an entire degree.

In the context of this paper, study abroad will be defined using guidelines outlined by the briefing book assembled for the Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Fellowship Program for Study Abroad titled, *The State and Future of Study Abroad in the United States*. Study abroad will be classified as an educational experience outside of the United States including class work, work experience or community service where students are awarded academic credit that counts toward a degree at an American institution of higher education. Study abroad programs differ in location, length of time, and learning objectives. They may be coordinated through the student’s home institution, a third party provider or a program in which students may enroll directly in foreign institutions. The length of time spent overseas with study abroad include, but are not limited to, a three-week program, a j-term (January term which is often four weeks long), a summer abroad, a semester long program, or an academic year. This definition does not include students, like me, who obtain an entire degree from a foreign institution.

2.2 Student Profile

Who Participates?

If a typical American student abroad was to be described, that person would most likely be female, Caucasian, in her junior year of school, studying social sciences, and be located in Western Europe (Open Doors, 2006). To expand on the profile of those who study abroad, data from *Open Doors 2006* will be used. These statistics do not

demonstrate the entire population of internationally mobile students as the numbers do not include those who obtain an entire degree abroad. These statistics do, however, include all levels of higher education, while my research is focused mainly on undergraduates.

Females make up 65.5 percent of the students who go abroad and only 56 percent of the entire enrolment of students in higher education. The trend of females dominating study abroad has been the case since Open Doors started collecting data over ten years ago. The under representation of male students seems to have roots in decades-old practices stemming from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. During that time, affluent daughters were often sent off to finishing schools in countries such as Switzerland. The tradition of sending females abroad has stayed strong since then (Dessoiff, 2006).

An overwhelming majority of students are Caucasian. When comparing the statistical makeup of students who study abroad to those enrolled in higher education, students from minority backgrounds are clearly underrepresented. The tables below display the disparity in participation in terms of race.

Figure 2.1

Races of U.S. Students who Study Abroad	
<i>Source: Open Doors 2006</i>	
White, non-Hispanic	83.2 percent
Black, non-Hispanic	03.4 percent
Hispanic	05.1 percent
Asian/Pacific Islander	06.0 percent
Native American	00.5 percent

Figure 2.2

Races of U.S. Students Enrolled in H.E.	
<i>Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics</i>	
White, non-Hispanic	67.4 percent
Black, non-Hispanic	12.0 percent
Hispanic	12.0 percent
Asian/Pacific Islander	05.8 percent
Native American	01.0 percent

For how Long do they go Abroad?

The majority of American students who study abroad participate in short-term programs. In the most recent *Open Doors* report, an overwhelming majority of students, 93.8 percent, studied abroad for less than a year. It should be mentioned that students who enroll in foreign institutions independently and do not receive credit for their studies (at an American institution) are not included in this data. Summer programs, January terms and other programs lasting less than eight weeks in duration account for over half of the students who go abroad. 37.5 percent of students study abroad for a semester. Short sojourns are accountable for the growth experienced in recent years in study abroad in America.

The most popular time to go abroad is during a student's junior year of school; 35.8 percent of students study abroad during this time. Only 3.1 percent of students choose to study abroad their first year of college and 19.6 percent of students leave during their senior year. 12.2 percent study abroad during their sophomore year. Also, to be considered are 15.2 percent of students who simply classified themselves as undergraduates, not specifying their year in school. The numbers of students who study abroad while obtaining a Masters or Doctorate degree make up only a small percentage of the total number of students studying abroad with only 8.9 percent.

The top five fields of study of participants are presented below. Foreign language studies falls fifth on the list which has seen recent growth in business and management majors.

Table 2.3

**The top five fields of study of U.S.
study abroad participants:**

Source: Open Doors 2006

1. Social Sciences 22.6 percent
2. Business and Management 17.5 percent
3. Humanities 13.3 percent
4. Fine or Applied Arts 7.6 percent
5. Foreign Languages 7.5 percent

Where do they go?

Students are more likely to study in Europe than other regions of the world. The top destinations for American students to study abroad are outlined on the following page with the percentage of students choosing to travel to designated countries.

Table 2.4

**Leading 20 Destinations of
U.S. Study Abroad 2004/05**

Source: Open Doors 2006

1. United Kingdom	15.6
2. Italy	12.1
3. Spain	10.1
4. France	7.5
5. Australia	5.2
6. Mexico	4.5
7. Germany	3.2
8. China	3.1
9. Ireland	3.1
10. Costa Rica	2.4
11. Japan	2.0
12. Austria	2.0
13. New Zealand	1.3
14. Czech Republic	1.2
15. Greece	1.2
16. Chile	1.2
17. South Africa	1.1
18. Argentina	1.5
19. Brazil	1.0
20. India	0.9

The top four destinations sought by American students are within Europe representing 60.3 percent of students. Latin America hosts 14.4 percent, Asia 8.0 percent, Oceania 6.7 percent, and Africa 3.5 percent. Policymakers have expressed a desire to increase the number of students who study abroad in non-traditional destinations.

The numbers presented in this introduction are to serve as a reference point, a place to start when considering study abroad in the American context. The U.S. has a long way to go in terms of widening and increasing access and opportunities for students. The students who study abroad reflect a small segment of society. Although participants may not belong to an elitist society, they join an elite group when they study abroad. Is it possible that study abroad will go through a similar transformation as the university did from serving the elite to serving the masses? Limited in the scope of participants, the shift in capacity and access to higher education within the U.S. was due much in part to a national vision and governmental sponsored initiatives. It could be argued that the next natural step in the evolution of U.S. higher education is a national study abroad initiative following in the tradition of the establishment of the land grant colleges in 1862 and the G.I. bill. Designating land for colleges to be built upon and funding for returned WWII veterans to attend college greatly impacted the capacity and access to higher education in the United States (Geiger, 2005).

2.3 Rationale for Increasing Study Abroad

An educated citizenry has been considered the fuel of America's knowledge economy. Future leaders, businesspeople, scientists, medical professionals, and teachers need to be able to think globally in terms of economic, political, environmental and social aspects of life. Direct experiences of living and interacting with other cultures can be an effective way to gain this crucial understanding.

“By providing hands-on learning and practical experience, study abroad

compliments on-campus learning and serves both national security and economic competitiveness goals by preparing a citizenry better able to live and work effectively in a global environment” (Lincoln Fellowships Advisory Council, 2004, B-3).

The European Commission recognized the importance of international student mobility over twenty years ago with the creation of the Erasmus program⁴. With the launch of the program in 1987 and funding from the European Commission, the program focussed on promoting student and teacher exchange within Europe. Since then, more than 1.2 million students have participated and studied outside their countries and within the borders of Europe. Currently thirty-one countries participate in the program which had an operating budget of over 187 million Euros in 1994. Although the Erasmus program was created with a smaller scope of Europeanization rather than internationalization, there are lessons to be learned from its creation and the support it has received. Could the rationale used in the creation of Erasmus be adapted and applied to the American context? How does the United States stand to benefit from students going abroad?

International student mobility falls under a bigger umbrella of internationalization of higher education. A definition of internationalization of higher education is difficult to pinpoint. It is linked to movements of change created by forces of globalization. At the national and institutional levels, there are desires to increase America’s international capacities and competencies. Study abroad can be considered a part of the process of internationalizing the higher education system in America. Although the rationales for the internationalization of higher education vary from country to country, rationale specifically for student mobility will be discussed.

Four different policy rationales for cross-border education have emerged as the mutual understanding approach, the skilled migration approach, the revenue-generating approach, and the capacity building approach (OECD Observer, 2004). As noted earlier,

⁴ Information on the Erasmus Program was taken from the European Union’s website found at http://ec.europa.eu/index_en.htm

the U.S. is a leader in terms of inward student mobility, hosting more international students than any other country in the world. However, the rationales for increasing outbound and inbound student mobility must be considered separately.

The rationale for increasing the capacity of study abroad within the U.S. higher education system and most other Western countries differs a great deal from other parts of the world, specifically considering developing and emerging nations. With the most extensive higher education system in the world and a fully developed economy, one might question why Americans should leave the U.S. for education. Many would argue there is no push factor for students to travel to another country to receive education. A student from China may seek higher education in the U.S., as many do. China accounts for approximately ten percent of all international students in OECD areas because of the lack of opportunity in his/her country. In other words, restraints push Chinese students to seek education opportunities elsewhere and countries like America are able to pull these students in.

Rationale for promoting exchange in China could be defined as capacity building. Outbound student mobility offers a quick way to build the capacity of the work force within. Although the U.S. does not have similar needs to build capacity, there is an underlying common thread linking these countries' rationales together. A mutual understanding approach is primary in the U.S. and could be considered secondary in China but can be applicable and is an important aspect of student mobility in both countries.

Although a student from China may seek educational opportunities in the U.S., perhaps because the opportunity may not exist in his/her country, this student, just as an American would, will be exposed to another culture, will be forced to interact with others unlike him/herself and will come to have a greater understanding of his/her own culture. These aspects of study abroad are the same for all students, no matter what country they call home. Increasing mutual understanding may not be the most pressing issue for student mobility in China as it may be in America but can be considered just as important as capacity building.

The mutual understanding approach encompasses cultural and political goals that can be utilized by countries as different as America and China. Individuals, educational institutions, and society as a whole stand to benefit from study abroad. Living in a society

that is ever increasing globally, the importance of building relationships with countries around the world can be facilitated by interaction, communication, and common understanding.

Bridges are being built by students who leave the U.S. and engage in international experiences. Unfortunately, this group represent a tiny segment of American society. Although America is known as the melting pot, it can be argued the “melting” of cultures stopped a long time ago. Americanism lives strong among the diversity within the nation and some consider this close-minded, nationalist attitude to be dangerous. NAFSA’s (Association of International Educators) Strategic Task Force on Education Abroad warns of the reality of emerging global challenges threatening the future security of America. New demands are being imposed on U.S. citizens where international knowledge and skills are imperative, not only for the global competitiveness and the economy, but also for national security.

“We strongly believe that the events of September 11, 2001, constitute a wake-up call, a warning that America’s ignorance of the world is now a national liability. Americans in vastly greater numbers must devote a substantive portion of their higher education to gaining an understanding of other countries, regions, languages, and cultures, through direct personal experience.” (NASFA, 2003, 2)

NAFSA supports the belief that the need to increase worldly relations can be met by America’s youth spending time outside of the U.S. experiencing different cultures, relating to people, and learning different ways of communicating and living. In order for the United States to be able to function within an ever-changing global society, its citizens must be able to think beyond their borders and become citizens of the world. The nation’s global relations can be improved by sending students abroad. Traditional college students are at the perfect place in their lives to leave for an extended time period. The majority do not have mortgages, spouses or children to leave behind. They are “free” of many obligations that adulthood brings which make it difficult to leave the country. College offers a time for self-discovery and presents the perfect opportunity to be exposed and challenged with the wonders of the world.

Why should American institutions of higher education incorporate, sponsor and even lead study abroad sojourns? Are universities and colleges responsible for meeting

the increasing global demands? How does international education fit into the purpose of the university and of higher education itself?

Burton Clark (1983, 183) writes, “An educational system must be heavily a product of its environment.” He goes on to explain that universities must be able to change within a changing society, adapting to provide relevant knowledge. If universities are to be considered as agents of change in society, increasing international understanding is the responsibility that falls partially on institutions of higher education.

The tradition of the American undergraduate experience has long been structured emphasizing the importance of a liberal arts education rather than one of specialization. Castells (2001) outlines the purpose of liberal education as the shaping of mind and character, the cultivation of aesthetic sensibilities, the broad human sympathies and the capacity for critical and independent judgment. All of these aspects of liberal education can be fostered through an international educational experience. Using the mutual understanding approach and the belief that university activities are responsible to social interests (Trow, 1970), the benefits of study abroad will be presented.

Research on the benefits of study abroad continues to emerge. The Institute for International Education of Students⁵ conducted a large quantitative survey, *The 50-Year IES Alumni Survey*, in 2004. The study assessed the long-term impact of study abroad by exploring how alumni perceive their study abroad experiences and its impact on their lives. Over 3,700 alumni participated in the study. Outcomes of the study will be used to demonstrate the positive aspects of study abroad further demonstrating the rationale used to support exporting students.

Growth for Individuals

The greatest area of growth that is often expressed by those who have participated in study abroad can be classified as personal. In the *The 50 Year IES Alumni Survey*, students reported that their study abroad experience helped them mature and increased their self-confidence. As mentioned, for many students, college is a time for self-

⁵ IES, Institute for International Education of Students is a non-profit organization which coordinates over thirty programs in sixteen different countries. Alumni from IES's study abroad program from 1950-1999 were surveyed.

discovery. Study abroad facilitates that process by placing students in foreign situations and forcing them to become independent and to interact with people from other cultures. Also reported in the survey was an increased understanding of their (home) cultures. By being removed from their society, students have the chance to reflect in a new way allowing them to better understand their own culture, values and biases. The research also found study abroad often leads to an overall increase in cultural understanding and reports that students began to seek greater diversity in friends after returning from their study abroad experiences. Sixty percent of students said study abroad experiences inspired in them a passion to learn about another culture or language. Sixteen percent of students studied abroad for a second time and seventy-four percent of respondents said their experience sparked an interest for travel.

The long-term benefits of study abroad are not only personal, they spill over into individuals' professional lives. Seventy-six percent of students said that the skills they learned while abroad influenced their career paths and sixty-two percent reported that study abroad ignited a new career interest which they pursued after graduation. Almost half of the respondents have worked or volunteered in an international capacity since their study abroad experience. As individuals benefit from study abroad personally and professionally, so does society.

Societal Growth

Although study abroad is experienced by individuals, in whom it is easiest to observe growth, there are assumed societal benefits. Students who study abroad are more likely to be engaged in campus activities and in their communities (Lund). Active citizenship is important for any society. Another popular argument in favour of study abroad is that it can help increase cultural understanding and lead to a more accepting society. Although societal growth is difficult to measure, some studies link study abroad and the cultural impact students make upon society when they return.

“It is often assumed that studying in another country for a period of time provides an excellent opportunity for cultural enrichment. Furthermore, as higher education is considered not only to develop a thorough understanding of theories, methods and facts within a given disciplinary structure, it is also considered to contribute to responsible citizenship, understanding of cultural heritage, and

reflection about values, concepts, and lifestyles. A study abroad period is widely considered to make an especially important contribution to society” (Opper, 1990, 117).

Obstacles to Overcome

One half to two thirds of prospective freshmen say that they want or intend to study abroad (Lincoln Fellowships Advisory Council, 2004). If so many students are interested in going abroad, why do so few students do so? The barriers for students to overcome in order to get on a plane and get outside of the U.S. are great. It is important to understand these barriers. The major barriers will be briefly presented in order to gain a larger perspective of the students who participate and what they must overcome in order to do so.

Money

The first and most recognizable barrier for students to overcome in order to study abroad is cost. Whether it refers to actual costs, perceived costs or opportunity costs, money is most likely the main deterrent for students. Carlson (1990) identified money to be the biggest barrier expressed by students who do not participate in study abroad. An analysis of 2004 IIE Passport cost data, conducted by the advisory committee for the Lincoln Commission, reveals a semester long study abroad program can range from \$2,000 to \$3000 for a sojourn of a few weeks to more than \$16,000 for a semester long experience. These numbers include tuition, housing and food but do not include airfare. There is no doubt the price tag for study abroad is out of reach for some students, especially those who come from lower income families. With some of highest tuition fees in the world, student loans are a reality for the majority of American students. Adding additional education costs in order to studying abroad could be perceived as irrational or even frivolous for students already making great investments in their education.

Perceived costs, or the student’s perceptions of the cost of study abroad, also serve as a deterrent. For many students, just the thought that *study abroad is expensive* is enough to keep them from exploring the possibility. For some students, there would also be a loss of opportunity costs if time were spent abroad. Those who work while in school would forfeit income while living overseas. Also considered as a financial constraint is

the belief that students would be unable to use financial aid whether it be federal, state, private or from their institution toward a study abroad experience.

The truth is, the Higher Education Act signed in 1992 mandates that students can use financial aid for study abroad if they are enrolled in a program for academic credit whether or not the study abroad program is required as a part of the student's degree. On top of that, there are growing numbers of scholarships and grants offered to students who wish to study abroad (Lincoln Fellowships Advisory Council, 2004).

Institutional Barriers

Higher education institutions across the U.S. are creating international or global offices of study with desires to promote international exchange. However, institutions themselves are often the ones creating the greatest roadblocks for access to study abroad. Rigid curricula, inflexibility in program designs, difficulty with credit transfers, and inadequate preparation or lack of support upon return are just a few of a long list of issues to be overcome. Many students view study abroad as unnecessary or inappropriate for their academic program and this feeling is often created by the university (Carlson 1990).

Lack of Knowledge and Fear of the Unknown

Lack of knowledge also proves to be a great barrier for students to go abroad. Unaware of the opportunities that are available to them, students are unable to make informed decisions. Assumptions such as: *there isn't a program that can fit in my schedule, I won't be able to graduate on time, I can't use financial aid funding, I don't speak a foreign language, and people in my program can't study abroad*, are detrimental to the types and numbers of students who engage in international education. Postponement of graduation serves as a major barrier for students when considering study abroad (Carlson, 1990).

3 Conceptualizing Study Abroad and Participants

Existing literature on study abroad is vast, yet limiting. The majority of studies conducted focus on and measure the results of the effects of study abroad after the student has returned. (Oppen, 1990, IIE 2004, Lund). They are often quantitative in nature and are limited in creating a theoretical framework to be used in further conceptualization. In this chapter, economic perspectives will be used to conceptualize study abroad itself and the students who participate as part of an overall educational experience. An economic perspective has been chosen due to the underlying belief that students study abroad because they believe it will help them gain a competitive advantage in the workforce. This perspective will also help in understanding the motives of students.

3.1 Study Abroad

One way to view study abroad is as a filter. Arrow (1973) presents the view that higher education (in this case, study abroad) serves as a screening process that sorts out individuals of different abilities. As a sorting mechanism, employers are then able to recognize and acknowledge the different levels of skill sets possessed by potential employees. Using the concept of a filter, study abroad would be considered another layer of the filtering process in higher education. The filter theory assumes students who are accepted and complete study abroad programs, signal to future employers that they possess a level of productivity capable of working within an international environment. They possess the skill sets that will enable them to deal with the complexities of different cultures and are willing to take the initiative to engage in such environments.

The filter model assumes all individuals have three characteristics that will be adapted to the study abroad experience: their record before taking off for their sojourn, their probability of getting through the program, and their productivity. In this case, study abroad serves as a double filter just as higher education does. Most study abroad programs require an application and selection process to act as the first filter. The next filter is the acquisition of funding and the actuality of going abroad and completing the program. Although I do not have statistics to further this point, it can be assumed there

are a certain number of students who do not make it through the second filter either because they do not take the trip in the first place after acceptance or because they return early.

The second filter for study abroad, completion of the program, does not have the same recognition as higher education does with the attainment of a degree. If a student participates in a study abroad program and decides to return early, there are no visible consequences obvious to an employer as there would be for students who did not finish their education and obtain a degree. Using the filter theory, it could be hypothesized students who study abroad are already unique from others before they depart and the experience abroad only allows others to view this distinction. The weaknesses of the filter theory in regards to study abroad are the barriers in place that block students from opportunities. If study abroad is to serve as a filter, all students should have equal access to be filtered. This is not the case and the barriers outlined in chapter two are serving as a filter, not the study abroad experience.

Study abroad can also be conceptualized using the human capital theory as all forms of education can be considered a form of capital. The major difference between the human capital theory and the filter theory is the argument of education and its impact on increased productivity and personal gains (Canton, 2001). The filter theory assumes higher education can be associated with increased capacity of productivity but does not actually cause it. On the other hand, mobility capital acknowledges the educational experience as an investment in oneself which will in turn increase the possibility for individual financial and non-financial gains. Using the human capital theory, it could be hypothesized that students who choose to study abroad choose to invest in themselves with the long-term goal of increasing their earning potential.

3.2 Students

In the text, *Student Mobility and Narrative in Europe* (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002), the concept of mobility capital is introduced. Acting as a subcomponent of human capital, the author argues mobility capital is the distinguishing factor that separates those who study abroad from those who do not.

“Our hypothesis is that they represent qualitative elite as well. Ready 'to move' as

they often say, they are open to changes in their environment: language, personal entourage, lifestyle, working style. They actually aspire to those changes, to this rift with the past which the desire for adventure signified” (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002, 51).

Mobility capital consists of four main constituent elements, family and personal history, previous experience of domestic and international mobility including language competence, the first experience of adaptation and the personality features of the student. Taken together, these various dimensions help to identify each student’s mobility capital before departure. The concept of mobility capital was used as framework for the research process of this study. Mobility capital was used as a key to help understand the uniqueness of the students who decide to pack their bags and engage in an international experience.

Mobility capital can be gauged by measuring the main four elements just outlined. In this study, these elements will be used to conceptualize the students in terms of their backgrounds, personalities, and influences. Using a semi-economic perspective, I will present theories relating to the American students.

Hypothesis #1: American students who study abroad possess high levels of mobility capital with their personalities serving as their greatest areas of mobility capital.

Murphy-Lejeune (2002) describes the makeup of the European families of participants as being open to foreignness in many different ways. Some of the students came from hybrid families that are accustomed to multiple nationalities. Other students had family lineage in other countries while some had welcomed a foreigner into their home through hosting an international student. It was not uncommon for students to have family members who travel extensively internationally or even reside in another country.

“In the majority of cases, the students portray their parents in similar terms: pro-European, experienced travelers or eager to travel, curious, professionally open to internationalization. Not all of them have had the opportunity to fulfill their longing for otherness, either learning a language or living abroad. Some of them hand over to their children this unfulfilled dream of discovering other cultures.” (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002, 22).

Although I was unable to include European students in my study, it is interesting to comment on how Americans differ from their European counterparts. It could be argued Americans exhibit lower levels of international connectivity, travel experience outside of the U.S., and language competency. American students, however, possess certain personality features that serve as their greatest area of mobility capital. This argument is made with the perception of American citizens as isolationists. Some believe the isolationist attitude has increased post 9-11 and Americans are becoming increasingly less engaged in foreign affairs (Granitsas, 2005). It is no secret most American families travel only domestically. This year the U.S. experienced the greatest growth in passport applications, but almost seventy-five percent of the U.S. population is not in possession of a passport. This growth has been linked to recent changes in regulations regarding travel to the Caribbean. On the other hand, Americans are known for being domestically mobile moving to different cities, states or even regions within the country. In future studies it would be interesting to measure the mobility capital of mobile American students vs. Europeans students.

An extremely important element of mobility capital is the personality of the individual. This aspect of student mobility would seem to be similar among American, European and other students seeking international experiences. In Murphy-Lejeune's (2002) study, students often considered themselves as being extroverted and outgoing. They listed curiosity, an attraction for novelty or difference, a desire to communicate and seek social contracts in new environments, as part of their personality features. No matter the nationality, a certain type of personality seems to be open to exploring and experiencing international experiences.

Also to be considered together with mobility capital is the influences in the students' lives. It is interesting to explore the type of influences students were exposed to when making the decision to go abroad since there is a desire to influence more students to do the same. The following hypothesis is presented as a beginning into this inquiry.

Hypothesis #2: Students can be influenced by several different types of people when led to make the decision to study abroad. Families and friends are the most influential groups of people with universities currently playing a minor role in persuading students to go abroad.

3.3 Motivations

High levels of mobility capital alone are not enough to lead students to study abroad; motivations must also be present. Canton (2001) argues that students participate in higher education for two basic reasons: consumption and investment. This economic perspective can also be used with study abroad. Utilizing the investment mode, students incur the cost of study abroad in both time and money in the hopes of increasing their future income potential. Under the consumption motive, study abroad provides an opportunity for immediate enjoyment and offers a gratifying experience.

Three features of motivations for European students have been distinguished as a desire to: speak foreignness, live foreignness, and open up to foreign relations (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). Although the students included in this study went abroad for longer amounts of time when compared to the average American sojourner, the findings are interesting and can be used in comparison.

Another substantial study, The Study Abroad Evaluation Project (Opper, 1990) also provides relevant information on student motivation. Although the basis of the study had a focus on the impacts of study abroad, there was also an inquiry into student motivations. This study provides a comparative perspective regarding participants from the U.S. as well as four European countries. The study, quantitative in nature, ranked the main reasons students are motivated to study abroad. The highest ranked motivation among Europeans and Americans was a desire to improve foreign language. The second highest ranked motive was a desire to live in and make acquaintances from another country. Professional motives, the expectation that study abroad will improve career prospective falls to third on the list for European motives. Professional motives fall under the desire to enhance the understanding of a particular country for the Europeans. The professional motives for Americans were ranked forth on the list. Falling at the bottom with little or almost no importance were: friends were going, the opportunity to establish ties with one's ethnic heritage and the expectation to get better grades or examination results after returning.

Although both studies argue a desire to increase foreign language is the main motivating factor for students who choose to be mobile, I do not believe this is the case

for the majority of American undergraduate students who study abroad today for short sojourns.

Hypothesis # 3: Language learning is not a primary reason for participation in study abroad for the majority of American students who study abroad for short sojourns.

This hypothesis is based on the growing number of students participating in study abroad and the decreasing number of students enrolling in foreign language. Foreign language majors are ranked fifth on the list of students who study abroad in the *Open Doors 2006* data. It is not implied that students without a foreign language major do not study foreign languages but simply notes that there are decreasing enrollment numbers in foreign language studies and increasing enrollment in study abroad programs. It is no coincidence that the U.K. hosts the largest number of American students with 15.5 percent. Australia is the fifth most popular destination with 5.2 percent and Ireland welcomes 3.1 percent of the students. Together, these English speaking countries welcome almost one fourth of American students who study abroad hosting 23.9 percent of outwardly mobile students (Open Doors, 2006).

It is also important to keep in mind over ninety percent of American students study abroad for short sojourns (Open Doors, 2006) while the students in the studies discussed went abroad for a year. With the increase in popularity in short sojourns, study abroad is attracting different types of students changing the traditional face of study abroad.

Hypothesis #4: The main motivating factor for American students to study abroad is a desire to experience something new, exciting and culturally different from that to which they are accustomed.

This hypothesis was formulated with the knowledge that study abroad programs are increasingly attracting great numbers of students from diverse backgrounds. This is also based on personal assumptions and the findings of the studies presented in this chapter.

Hypothesis #5: When making the decision to study abroad, students have professional motivations related to their future career, competitiveness and employability. They view study abroad as investment in the professional aspect of their lives.

This hypothesis was created with the fact that non-traditional areas of study known for study abroad participation, such as business management majors, are increasingly participating in study abroad. Building on the concept of mobility capital, past studies and my experiences, the fifth and final hypothesis leads into the conceptual framework used in the study.

3.4 Conceptual Framework

Using the literature and hypotheses discussed in this chapter, three types of student motivations have been identified. The first classification, personal motives, can be short-term or long term, and considered investment or consumption motives. Students can be motivated by reasons of personal growth or for immediate enjoyment. The second type of motivate can be classified as professional. Students who have professional motives recognize and express a desire to increase their earning potential upon return. This form of motive can be considered as a part of the investment mode. Students are willing to invest time and money to go abroad with the hopes they will benefit financially in the long run. The third type of motive, academic motive, is directly related to the obtainment of a student's degree. Since study abroad is part of the college experience and counts toward a degree, it will be included in conceptualization. The desire to learn to speak or improve foreign language skills also falls under this heading although language learning could also fall under the umbrella of the personal and professional categories.

Language learning and academic motives can be considered both as investment and consumption motives. Students can view study abroad and language learning as a consumption motive because they have the opportunity to experience the language first hand in a way that is impossible in America. With the investment motive, students view gaining foreign language skills as an investment in themselves which could lead to benefits in their personal and professional lives. All three of these classifications of

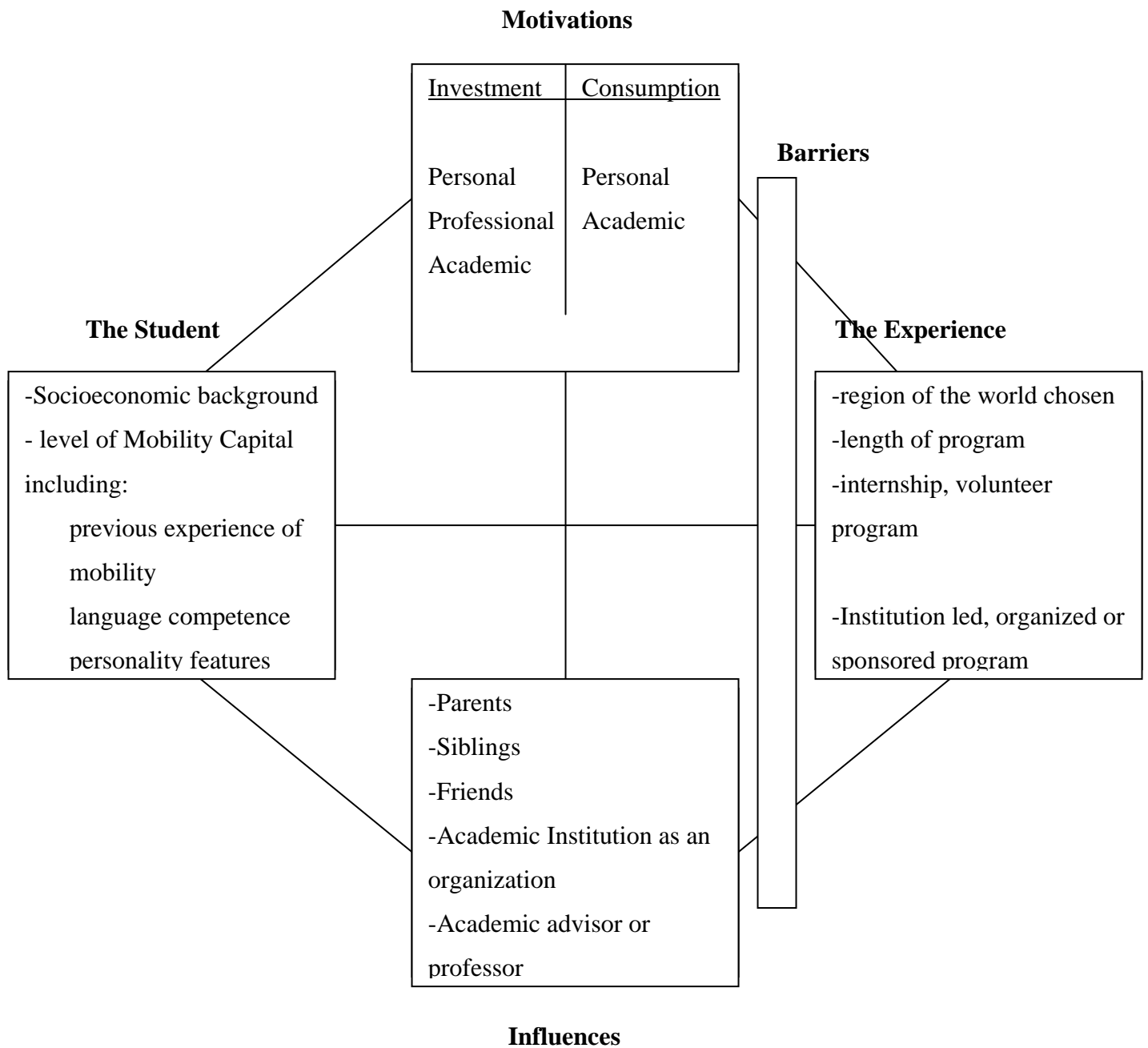
motivating factors, professional, personal and academic, can exhibit a desire for monetary or non-monetary benefits.

The research question for this study as well as relevant literature has been presented. Moving forward, the conceptual framework for the research conducted will be presented. Very few students are able to break through the layers of barriers to access study abroad. Students who spend the time, money and effort to jump these hurdles are unique in their possession of mobility capital. Students who study abroad are likely to possess a high level of mobility capital when compared to their classmates who stay at home (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). However, possession of high levels of mobility capital is not enough to guide a student overseas. It is a combination of their motivations, influences and mobility capital that distinguish them from others. When these aspects are considered to be interconnected, an all-encompassing view of the students and their decision to be mobile can be understood.

The diagram on the following page is an attempt to conceptualize the different factors that may lead Americans to study abroad. Students should be viewed as individuals with different backgrounds, levels of mobility capital, motivations and influences in their lives. All of these aspects are interrelated and together impact a student's decision-making process. When the right combination is made and a student is exposed, able and motivated, he/she is able to break through the extensive barriers to study abroad. Once completed, the study abroad experience continues to shape the student, his/her perceptions, his/her motivations and even his/her influences. In a sense, this diagram should be considered a circle. Not only the decision to study abroad is affected by the student as an individual, his/her motivations and influences, but also the type of study abroad program in which he/she chooses to participate, the country where he/she studies and the length of the program in which he/she participates is affected by the student.

Figure 3.1

Conceptual Framework



4 Methodology and Research Design

The data collection tool utilized in this research project was the semi-structured interview; there were ten of these interviews conducted. This qualitative research strategy was chosen for several reasons. Qualitative research emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman, 2004). The aim of this research project was to explain the forces causing students to make the decision to go abroad and to identify and discover important variables to create hypotheses that could be used in future research and to motivate Americans to go overseas. The unique strength of qualitative research is that it is exploratory, descriptive, and assumes the value of context and setting while searching for a deeper understanding (Marshall, 1995). In order to gain an understanding of student motivations, qualitative research offers an opportunity to view the world through their eyes and allows theoretical concepts to emerge out of the data. In-depth interviews provided an opportunity for students to share their story allowing for participants perspectives to unfold as they viewed it.

Although this study presents an opportunity to gain insight into American students who participate in study abroad, it is limited in many ways. The number of students interviewed was restricted to ten due to time constraints. This small group of students is not meant to be used to make grand conclusions about all American students who study abroad but to provide a window into the world of a few. It would have been interesting to compliment the qualitative data with a larger scale data collection project of quantitative surveys. It would also be interesting to include a comparison group of students who do not study abroad. As mentioned, time was the main reason these additions were not incorporated.

As mentioned, participants had already participated in a study abroad experience when they were interviewed. Perhaps the experience itself had bearing on the way in which students responded to questions. Their time spent overseas could have clouded their original motivations. Ideally, it would have been best to interview students just before they departed. This way their experience would not influence them and ultimately, their responses. However, this project was to be conducted within the spring semester, therefore making it nearly impossible to interview students before departing for a study

abroad experience. Most students would have been in their hometowns with their families for the holiday break and would be leaving from there. By interviewing students who had returned, I was able to meet with students who were back at their institutions attending classes. Although the potential influence from the experience itself will play a role in the research findings, the data still offers insight into the world of the study abroad students. As future studies investigating the motivations of students are conducted, it could be interesting to interview students before they depart and after they return to see if their perceptions of their original motivations changed with their experiences.

This research will be conceptualized using the method of cognitive anthropologists. Cognitive anthropologists (Marshall, 1995) assume that the participants' perspectives are organized into cognitive or semantic schemata-categories of meaning that are systematically related to one another. The data gathered from in-depth interviews can be analyzed qualitatively to identify domains of understanding.

On the next page, the research strategy for this project is outlined. This strategy was considered to be a process and guided the research from start to finish. Each step of the strategy will be further elaborated upon in this chapter. Some of the steps were covered in chapters one and two. The data collection and analysis will be presented in the following chapter.

Research Strategy



The first two steps of the research strategy, relevant literature and theoretical framework, were previously touched upon. Moving forward, the next step was creating an interview guide.

Creating an interview guide (see appendix A for interview guide)

Semi-structured interviews were selected because of their flexibility. Bryman (2004) notes they allow for some latitude for the interviewer to ask further questions in response to what are seen as significant replies. Utilizing an interview guide, a researcher follows a set of questions to lead him/her along the way. The interview guide consists of fairly specific topics and questions that are to be covered. The interviewee has a great deal of leeway on the way in which to answer and the questions do not always follow the direct path outlined by the guide. Changes can be made to keep the flow of the interview natural.

The interview guide was created using the theoretical framework as a backdrop. A mixture of open-ended, short answer, and yes and no questions were used. The questions at the beginning of the interview were created to answer questions about the student's personal and family background. These were also designed to gain insight into the student's possession of mobility capital. Questions on previous experiences abroad, the extent of domestic mobility, personality features and language competency were also asked. The next group of questions focused on the initiation and motivations of the students. The interview guide ended with questions on influences and barriers as well reflections on their time abroad. The questions fell into these different categories creating a balance of structure in the type of data collected as well as flexibility for the individuality of each student.

Gaining Access to Students, Selection of Students

With the education privacy act forbidding educational institutions from releasing personal information of students, including names of those who participated in study abroad programs, it was a challenge to acquire names of potential students to interview. Attending a seminar for returnees at the University of Cincinnati provided an opportunity to meet students who had recently returned from a study abroad program. After a short introduction, lead cards (see appendix B) requesting name, gender, race, age, type of

study abroad program, host country and length of time spend abroad were passed out to each student. The cards had a place to mark whether the students were interested in participating in the study and their availability. Students were informed that filling out the information card was voluntary as was participation in the study.

Thirty-two students responded showing interest in participating. From the thirty-two students, eight were chosen. Two other students, one from a small private college and another from a mid-size state college were also included. Adding students from other types of institutions gave an opportunity for another aspect of comparison. When selecting students to interview, it was an aim to include as much diversity as possible. Students from different backgrounds, socioeconomic statuses, majors, study abroad programs, and host countries were chosen. In chapter two, the typical study abroad student was presented. Seeking beyond the profile of an average study abroad student, a diversified group was chosen. In order to motivate males, minorities and others who do not typically go abroad, these types of students needed to be included. All students who were selected had participated in a semester long study abroad program. This variable remained constant for all students selected as it can be assumed that students who go abroad for a short program lasting two or three weeks and students who live abroad for a year or more could potentially differ greatly in their motivations. A semester long program is long enough for students to step out of the tourist shell and experience life as a native.

The age of students represents the most stable variable of the student profile; ages ranged from twenty to twenty-two years. Since females dominate study abroad, it was important to include males in the study. Family backgrounds vary as well and socioeconomic levels which were linked to the amount of education the students' parents possess also varied. A basic profile of participants is outlined on the following page. All names have been changed to safeguard the participants' privacy.

Figure 4.2

Profile of Participants

Student	Gender	Race	Age	Major	Host Country	Institution
Jake	Male	Caucasian	22	English and History	France	Centre College
Adam	Male	Caucasian	22	Electronic Media	Belgium	University of Cincinnati
Courtney	Female	Caucasian	20	Electronic Media	Germany	University of Cincinnati
Alex	Male	Caucasian	22	Architecture	Denmark	University of Cincinnati
Jessica	Female	African American	21	Organizational Leadership	England	University of Cincinnati
Don	Male	Caucasian	22	Finance and Economics	Austria	University of Cincinnati
Anne	Female	Caucasian	21	Biology	Australia	University of Cincinnati
Sue	Female	Caucasian	21	Spanish and History	Mexico	University of Cincinnati
Lindsey	Female	Caucasian	21	International Studies	Italy	Northern Kentucky Uni.
John	Male	Caucasian	21	Business	China	University of Cincinnati

Conducting Interviews, Transcribing

Before the interviews were conducted, students were asked to complete a pre-interview questionnaire (see Appendix B) aimed at gathering basic biographical information. The questionnaire provided enough information on the students and their backgrounds so as an interviewer I was familiar with their situation prior to meeting them for the interview.

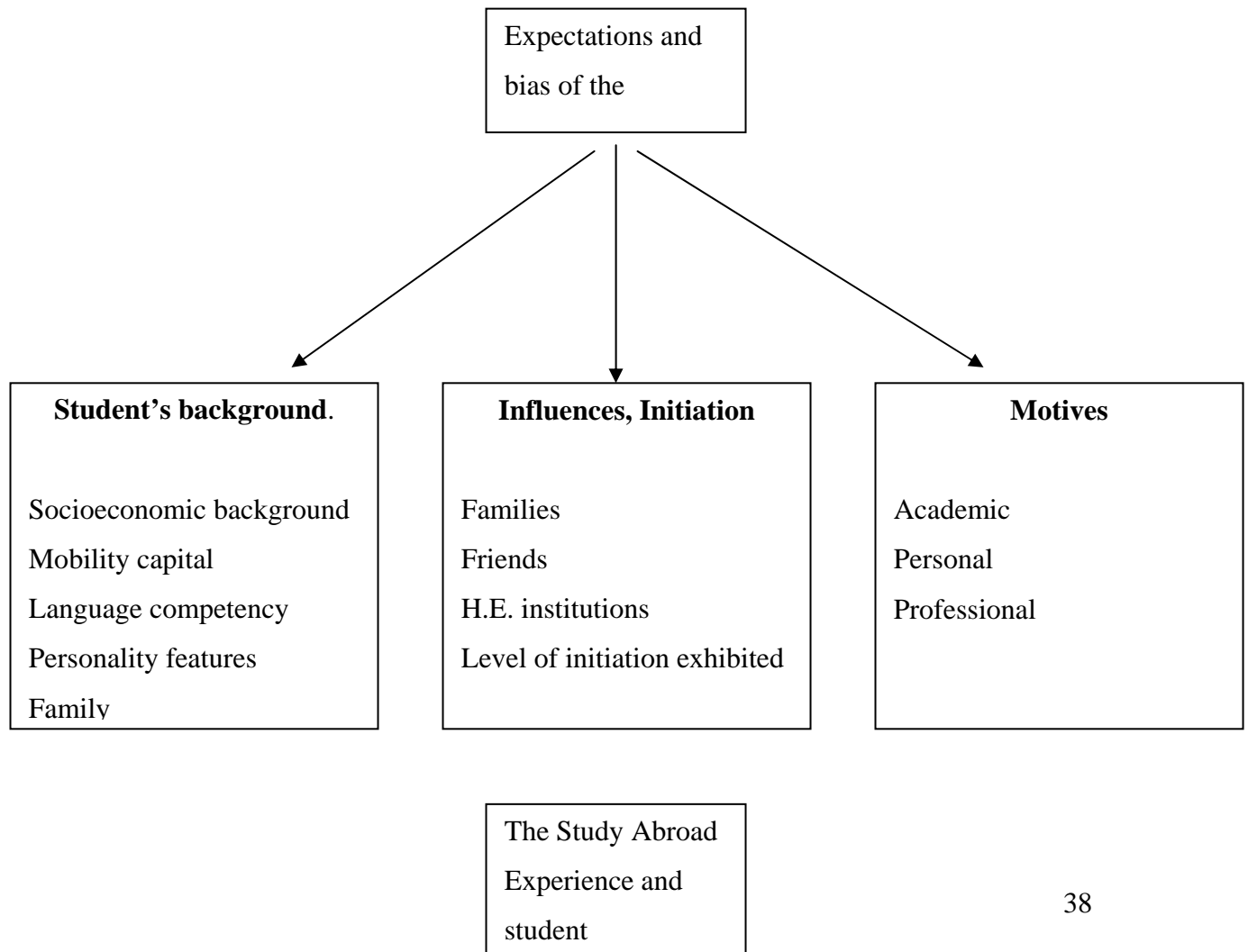
The interviews were conducted face-to-face and lasted approximately one hour each. Although logistically speaking, internet or email interviews would have been much easier to conduct, the interactive face-to-face interview is a major a priority. Personal interviews have many advantages compared to those that take place through computer, paper, or phone. They present an opportunity for the interviewee and interviewer to gain rapport and comfort with one another. They also allow for additional probing needed to gain additional information which is often insightful and interesting. They also allow for the interviewer to ask questions gaining clarification on questions or topics they may find confusing. The ability to capitalize on this interaction gets the students to open up and ask additional questions; this is the main advantage to using face-to-face interviews. People

communicate with more than just their words, and personal interviews acknowledge the importance of body language and eye contact.

The interviews were conducted on the student's college campus in a quiet area where the participant would feel open to answer questions freely. All interviews were recorded with a digital voice recorder and were transcribed thereafter. Using a recorder facilitates the interview process (Liamputtong, 2005) as it provides a level of detail and accuracy not obtained from memory or by taking notes. This device allows for greater attention to be placed on the interviewee through eye contact and it is relatively unobtrusive when compared to note taking. An effort was made to remain true to the spoken words of each student in the transcription process. The oral language of students remains without intervention other than the use of punctuation.

Figure 4.3

Procedure for Data Collection



5 The Motivating Factors

This chapter will present and attempt to bring meaning to the data personally collected through student interviews. Hoping to gain insight into the motivating factors leading students to study abroad, interviewees' mobility capital, background, and influences will be discussed as these aspects have an impact on decision-making paths. The words of the interviewees will be used to paint pictures of the complex issues of motivations. Reflections upon hypotheses presented in chapter two will also be made. The steps of qualitative data analysis outlined by Liamputtong (2005) were used as a guide in the beginning stages of analysis.

“Qualitative data analysis begins at the beginning. It is part of the research design, the literature review, theory formation, data collection, data ordering, filing reading and writing” (Liamputtong, 2005, 258).

The first step in the data analysis process was to identify units of analysis. Once these categories were generated, they were used as a tool for scrutinizing the data. The main categories identified for this project were: mobility capital, influences, initiation, and motivations. These categories started the beginning of the coding process. Once the data was coded, themes and patterns were identified and these will be presented.

Out of these categories, two types of students emerged. The first type of student is what will be referred to as the *solo sojourner*. This type of student usually participates in a program independent of their university. They travel alone and usually do not know anyone else enrolled in their program before departing. They seek out information on their own, apply without much assistance from their institution or family and conduct all the logistical legwork themselves. The solo sojourner is willing to go to great lengths to make their study abroad experience a possibility. Overcoming obstacles within their home institution, they work to gain approval of their program, to transfer credit, and deal with funding issues such as transferring loans. The solo sojourner is often willing to delay graduation, retake a course or schedule an unusually high load of course work when they return making up for time lost while abroad. They most likely made the decision to go abroad before they reached college. Often these students exhibit a desire to learn or increase their foreign language capacity through study abroad. The solo sojourner

probably has had a previous international experience abroad, perhaps with a school group, church group or their family. They are confident in their decision to study abroad and are not easily deterred from their goal. Friends are not likely to be influential in their decision-making process.

The second type of student is classified as the *group sojourner*. This student usually participates in a program coordinated either through the international office at their university or through their faculty of study. They travel and live together with friends or classmates finding comfort in their surroundings. This student is more likely to make the decision to go abroad while in college and is less independent in their decision-making process. Friends, classmates and institutional figures can be influential and even persuasive. The group sojourner is less likely to have foreign language learning as a motivation to going abroad. This student most likely made the decision to go abroad with consumption motivations while the solo sojourner is motivated more by personal investment motives identified as language learning and personal growth. They are not as willing to make as many sacrifices as the solo sojourner, transfer credits or delay graduation. These factors indeed make a difference in the group sojourner's decision-making process.

The type of program a student participates in is not the only determining factor in which category the sojourner can be classified. Complex factors such as the student's personality, their determination and motivations are also distinguishing characteristics to be considered. It is possible for a student to possess characteristics of the solo sojourner but for this student to choose to participate in a group study abroad program. Not all students fit directly into one of these two classifications; they are presented as a tool to be used to gain a better understanding of the types of students who study abroad and why they choose to do so.

Up until this point, the difference between the solo sojourner and the group sojourner has been highlighted but there are obvious links that run through the different types of American students who participate in short sojourns. Even with great differences in backgrounds, interests, areas of study, talents and the types of programs they wish to take advantage of, the personality and motives of the students have several similarities. The solo sojourner and group sojourner possess personality features that set them apart from other students. The solo sojourner may have "always" known they wanted to go

abroad while the group sojourner simply needs a little push from others. Students in both classifications are open to new experiences and are willing to take a chance abroad.

The students who participated in this study described themselves as outgoing and extroverted. Personal motivations were cited as the main force driving them to study abroad. Surprisingly, professional motivations fell into the background and were not primary in the decision-making process. Some were seeking an experience to grow as a person. Academic matters were of little importance although the programs are academically oriented. Going deeper to describe the students and their motivations, their possession of mobility capital will first be explored and the motivating factors identified will be expanded upon.

5.1 Mobility Capital and Background

All students possess a certain level of mobility capital. Murphy-Lejeune (2002) argues possession of mobility is what differentiates those who study abroad from those who do not. As presented in chapter two, the hypothesis created on possession of mobility capital is as follows: American students who study abroad possess high levels of mobility capital with their personalities serving as their greatest area of mobility capital.

Through the interviews I conducted, a series of questions which attempted to gauge each student's mobility capital were asked. As outlined in chapter three, mobility capital consists of different elements such as family history and background, language competence, personality features and previous experiences of mobility. A chart below briefly outlines some of these elements as well as the classification of the type of sojourner into which the students fit.

Figure 5.1

Participants Mobility Capital Before Departure

Student	Classification	Previous experience abroad	Languages studied	Self rated language proficiency
Jake	Group	High school, 2 weeks high school, 2 weeks, 2 summers	French	proficient
Adam	Solo	college	French, Italian	conversational, basic
Courtney	Group	None	French, German	basic, basic
Alex	Group	None	Spanish	proficient
Jessica	Solo	Caribbean, 2 weeks	Spanish	basic
Don	Group	None	Spanish, German	basic, basic
Anne	Solo	None	Spanish	basic
Sue	Solo	college study abroad, 3 months	Spanish	fluent
Lindsey	Solo	High school, 2 week trip	Spanish, Italian	basic, basic proficient, conversational,
John	Solo	High school, 2 weeks	Mandarin, French, Thai	basic

Continued

Student	Family outside of US	bilingual family
Jake	sister living in France	yes, sister
Adam	No	no
Courtney	No	no
Alex	brother temp. stationed abroad	no
Jessica	parents previously lived in Brazil	no
Don	distant relatives	no
Anne	No	no
Sue	aunt previously lived in Holland	no
Lindsey	No	no
John	No	yes, brother

Mobility capital is not easily measured. Areas such as family history must be explored and often additional probing is required to gain important information that is not always obvious to the student. Better than my words, students are able to paint a picture of their world and the way in which it is perceived. Reflections on the data will be presented and followed up with supporting statements from participants.

Family history

Students' family backgrounds lacked current international links. Their heritage seemed to play a very minor if even existent role in their lives. Most students were aware of their family roots in terms of the places they immigrated from however that was often the extent of their knowledge on the topic. When asked about her family heritage, Anne was able to provide little information:

"We came from Germany in the 1800s. So we have been here for a really long time. I don't really know a whole lot about it other than that." (Anne)

Alex has a more recent, visible links to his roots abroad with a grandfather who is 100 percent Italian. Unsure if his grandfather actually lived in Italy or has lived in America his whole life, he expressed frustrations regarding the lack of importance his Italian heritage has played in his life.

"I have a bit of different roots, a quarter Italian, German, Dutch and Irish. As far as my family knowing about its heritage, it's kind of sad. Cause I wanted to start to learn about it and nobody knows much except my Italian grandfather. Actually, I started learning Italian and spoke a little to him and he really didn't know any, which is kind of sad. I think he is a first generation American and I say, I think, because I don't really know." (Alex)

None of the students related their self identity to their cultural heritage; they viewed themselves solely as Americans. Don characterizes his childhood home town and his family as Irish Catholic but when asked about the role of family heritage in his life, Don responded:

"It's not a great effect on me but we still communicate with some of our relatives in Germany and Austria. So, to some extent, but if people asked me my defining characteristics, I wouldn't say I am of Irish or of German decent; I would say I was an American. I know it, but it's not a defining characteristic." (Don)

Other students weren't very clear on their family roots and couldn't offer much information on the topic. This lack of knowledge demonstrates the insignificance of their lineage growing up. None of the students said their families practice traditions of their ancestry; they lack cultural depth beyond their own.

Only one student had been directly exposed to another culture for an extended amount of time before attending college. Don's attraction to the outside world began when he was just a child. His family welcomed several foreign exchange students into their home. Don's experience with these students unlocked his curiosity and willingness to be open to different types of people. He recalled the strong relationship he had with the exchange students and a desire to visit them in their home countries one day:

"I am blessed in the fact that since I was young I was introduced to different cultures. I had about eight or nine different exchange students. My mother grew up with them too, that is where the idea originally came from. I have always known about different countries and I have always known that Europe is over there and these are the countries. I might have known where Holland was when I was six and knew something about it when I was ten. I think that if your family has that, they don't have to press it upon you." (Don)

Many of the participants classified the town where they grew up as small, closed-minded and culturally singular. To my surprise, all participants were from cities or towns throughout Kentucky and Ohio. Interestingly, none of the interviewees grew up more than three hours away from their college of choice. It would be easy to assume students who travel across the country for education would be more willing to travel across the world for education. Perhaps this assumption is misguided. It would be interesting to compare to the distance students travel to attend college of those who study abroad and those who do not. I was unable to locate current data on the distance students travel to go to college. This type of information could provide an interesting area of comparison. Are internationally mobile students less domestically mobile than other students? Does lack of domestic mobility contribute to the motivations to study abroad? All of the students expressed a desire to seek something new not having lived in different parts of America. This could be a contributing factor to their decisions to study abroad.

New York and California are the two states that send the largest number of students abroad (Open Doors, 2006). Home of the two largest cities in America, these states are difficult to compare to the mid-west and other regions in America. It seems the information collected is regionally relevant. What types of towns did college students in NYC grow up in? How far have they traveled to attend college? These topics pose important background information relevant to the driving forces leading students to seek an educational experience in another country.

Adam who grew up in Cincinnati attends the University of Cincinnati located less than fifteen minutes from his childhood home. When asked to describe where he grew up, Adam shared his perception of his hometown:

“I grew up on the west side of Cincinnati. Cincinnati in general is a bit conservative; the West side is a bit more conservative. The common thought is if you grow up on the west side, you will die on the west side. These are all stereotypes and I’m sure they don’t go outside of Cincinnati but there is a big division between the east and the west side. On the west side there is an all male high school, Elder. And there are still forty-five year old men that go to every football game, that’s why you don’t leave. Downtown Cincinnati is quite scary; it is scary for my mother still.”(Adam)

Cincinnati is a substantial American city with a population of over one million and although it is reasonably diverse, Adam’s community is not. When asked if there was diversity in his town, he responded:

“No, white and catholic. I grew up in my house. Within five minutes there is probably six to seven different catholic churches all within a five mile drive. Very white, very catholic, very christian.” (Adam)

Anne grew up in a less urban area. She described her town and the people who live there in less than favorable ways. Anne described a feeling of “wanting more” as well as many of the other students who were not satisfied by their hometown and do not want to live there in the future. When asked to describe her hometown, Anne didn’t need time to reflect on her answer.

“It’s very, very small. There are about 5,000 people in our entire town. I really don’t even enjoy going home because the people, they don’t ever change. They are so set in that mind frame, like there is nothing outside of Cold Water. Like, it’s just me and my little house and I go to the bar every weekend and they don’t do anything else.” (Anne)

When asked if her hometown was diverse, Anne responded:

“Not at all. No. It’s all the same, they are all the same. I mean, people are amazing there but at the same time, everybody knows everything about you and even now, I go home and people are like, I heard you did this and this and this. I’m like, I haven’t even been here. I just don’t like it. I don’t enjoy that at all. I like going home and visiting people but I would never go back for good”. (Anne)

It seems that the amount of diversity a student is exposed to throughout their life plays a role on their decision to seek new educational opportunities. Some would argue the more types of people a person is exposed to throughout their life; the more open they would be to accepting new cultures and people. Therefore it could be assumed students who have backgrounds of diversity would be more susceptible to participating in study abroad. In this case, the students did not perceived themselves as having been exposed to culturally or racially diverse communities. Perhaps their lack of exposure to different types of people fed into their desires to go abroad.

When Alex began reflecting on his hometown he was very aware of the lack of diversity he grew up with and the impact it had on him. When asked about the diversity in his hometown, Alex responded:

“Not a whole lot of diversity, no. For example, when I was in primary school, it was all Caucasian, maybe a couple of blacks, Asians were rare and anything else was almost unheard of.... Maybe that contributes to my curiosity of everything.” (Alex)

In future studies, it would be interesting to compare the types of cities where study abroad participants grew up. Would the majority of students come from diverse

communities or are they similar to the students who participated in this study?

Language Competency

None of the participants grew up in bilingual homes or have bilingual parents. Only two students had family members who spoke another language and they were siblings. When asked if he had bilingual family members, Adam began to laugh and responded:

“No, we’re not very culturally aware in terms of my family. If there was ever a second language instituted here, like Spanish... that would blow their minds! They wouldn’t understand it at all.”. (Adam)

All of the students were first exposed to foreign language in middle or high school. Stephen recalled the first time he realized the possibility of learning another language. This was when he started high school which is considered late in life, and is often the case for American students. John had to stop and think when asked when he was first exposed to foreign language:

“I think one of the clearest times was in the 9th grade when I first starting learning French in high school, when it was first offered. It was really strange for me to think about a different language, it was a different concept for me. How do you speak another language? It was a category I didn’t have in my brain. It was really interesting to think about.” (John)

Previous Experience of International Mobility

Before conducting this research, I hypothesized American students would have limited, if existent, experiences in traveling outside of the U.S. Half of the students interviewed had traveled outside of the United States prior to their study abroad experience while the other half traveled overseas for their first time when studying abroad. Interestingly, all but one of the traveled students would be classified as solo sojourners. All but one of the students who had previously traveled outside of the U.S. had participated in group travel through a high school or church organized trip. It could be assumed that a previous experience of international mobility plays a positive role in getting students to go abroad again and for longer periods of time. Participation in group

travel can give students the confidence and desire to “go it alone” and leave the U.S. for another experience.

Sue participated in a study abroad program early in her college career that was coordinated in cooperation with her university. She studied with other American students and professors. After returning from this experience, Sue began searching for another opportunity. Previously a group sojourner, Sue had become a solo sojourner for her next experience as an English teacher in Mexico.

As mentioned, half of the students had never been abroad before. When asked if she had previously traveled outside of America, Courtney began to reflect about her family and their domestic and international mobility:

“On my mom’s side, I couldn’t imagine anybody leaving the U.S. I just, I love them but I just think they pretty much, I feel that they stay, they’ve all grown up in Kentucky and they have stayed there. My mom is the only one out of the family that has moved and were one and a half hours away. My mom said she wished she had the courage to do it. I don’t think the rest of my family would want to step out of their habitat. I was the first.” (Courtney)

Not having the experience of international travel before departing for study abroad, Courtney, like other students, found comfort in a university led or coordinated program. Highlighting this point several times throughout the interview, traveling with a group was important for Courtney and her first experience outside of the U.S.

“I felt like this was the first step, one that was kind of guided, you know, it was all in a nutshell, it was there for me in a package. All I had to do was write the check and say okay. It was all pretty much taken care of. I mean, I had to get my own plane ticket and stuff like that but everything was set up, where I was going to live and my classes. It was comforting to know it was going to be all set up for the first time I go.”(Courtney)

Personality features

All of the students interviewed were open, easy to talk to and extroverted. The participants often used the word outgoing to describe their personality and tended to

enjoy meeting new people, traveling to new places, and seeing new things. They were often self-motivated, ambitious and determined. The first description Jake used to describe himself was outgoing:

“Umm, I think I am probably; I am pretty outgoing and very much a leader. Type A personality, I would say. I am kind of a perfectionist and really strive to get things done well and efficiently. Umm, I like things in order and knowing I am very organized and responsible for where everything lies.” (Jake)

Describing themselves in similar ways to the European students interviewed in Murphy Lejeune’s (2002) study, the American and European students who study abroad have similarities in the area of their personality.

“What are the personality attributes which predispose an individual to be a potential wanderer? One broad characteristic, generally agreed upon, is that they are outgoing or extroverted, turned outside. This general characteristic manifests itself in several different guises. Most students list curiosity, attraction for novelty or difference, and finally sociability or a desire to communicate and seek social contacts, as the three core elements of the traveling personality” (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002, 67).

This general agreement of students’ personalities being outgoing and extroverted is certainly the case among the American students and what seems to be the greatest similarity between the European and American students.

5.2 Influences

In positive and negative ways, different people influence students in their decisions of whether to study abroad or not. My hypothesis on this topic was formulated as follows: Students can be influenced by several different types of people when led to make the decision to study abroad. Family and friends are the most influential groups of people with universities playing a minor role in persuading students to go abroad.

The data collected for this project shows students have been influenced by more than one person throughout their lives. A positive influence can be as obvious as a sibling or close friend who completed a study abroad program or as unobvious as a parent exposing their child to something as simple as the world news. Lindsey, a solo sojourner, reflected on her childhood fully aware she was not directly exposed to other cultures growing up. She recalled a simple memory that can be used to help understand how a solo sojourner can begin developing years before college:

“As a small child, I was always around my parents. It’s kind of weird but when I would come home every afternoon from school, Dad and I would sit down and watch World News Tonight with Peter Jennings. He always reads and being exposed to a world outside the United States instills that passion. I think my parents did it unknowingly and those links they gave me to the outside world led me to this direction.”(Lindsey)

Siblings can play very influential roles to opening other siblings to international travel. Part of the unknown has been taken out of the equation for students who have a brother or a sister who has participated in a study abroad program. They realized there is an opportunity and have watched someone else go through the process bearing witness to the steps it takes to prepare, eventually leave, and return. Students with siblings who have been abroad have an advantage over those who do not. Don referred to his older brother who studied abroad before him several times throughout the interview and when asked why he made the decision to go he shared:

“I mean, one of the biggest things was that my brother, the closest one to me, Randy. I would never say this to him but I really look up to him. Growing up, him and I were always the closest and we played lots of sports together... I was always the backup. I’m 18 months younger. When Randy went abroad, he said, just do it. I don’t care where you go or what you do. It will teach you so much and it will give you a leg up in the professional world. I went and everything is true, that is the main reason.” (Don)

Students who have completed study abroad programs can be very influential when speaking of their experiences, especially for students classified as a group sojourners. Spreading positive words about their experience of study abroad can make the desire to participate contagious.

When asked who was influential in his decision-making process, Jake referred to many different people in his life:

“I had a lot of older friends that had all traveled abroad and said you have to, you can’t miss this opportunity. You will come back and be more focused, you’ll know what you want to do or at least you’ll know what major to declare, you will be a better student, you will have a broader cultural viewpoint, you’ll have a better perspective for American culture and just all the things you miss you realize you take for granted. All of these really positive influences. My sister and her, I guess he was her fiancé at the time, her husband now, they influenced me because they both studied abroad and both of my parents supported me. Basically, everyone around me.” (Jake)

The group traveler tends to be influenced more by friends, classmates, and professors. Alex participated in a program coordinated through the architecture school at his university. He decided to go abroad after the majority of his classmates had made the decision to go. The “buzz” of excitement from his classmates and encouragement from co-workers persuaded him to take part.

“It was a tough decision. Actually, when I first heard about the program, I kind of brushed it off. My parents are kind of middle class and we don’t have a lot of money. It would have been up to me to fund it. So I just kind of brushed it off. Then more and more people decided to go. Then I talked to co-workers on the internship where I was working and they told me, you got to go, you got to do it, it will be the best decision you will ever make. So, ultimately, I was like fine, it might be the only opportunity to do this kind of thing. No kids, no ties, no wife. So yeah, I took out a few extra loans and got a little bit more in debt but I defiantly don’t regret it.” (Alex)

Courtney recalled hearing a first hand account of a study abroad experience from a student during an orientation session. This was the first time she realized study abroad was a possibility. Characterized as a group traveler, Courtney only began to entertain the possibility after reaching college.

“Well, I just, I thought about it. I never thought about it in high school but when I came my freshman year, there was this girl and she was talking about the possibility to study abroad. I never thought, I could live outside of the United States for a bit of time and then come back. I started to think about it and put it to the back of my mind and then my professor started talking about a program he was going to make in Germany.” (Courtney)

Possessing the personality of an international traveler as characterized as a group sojourner, Courtney needed a little push from someone to go abroad. Professors and advisors can be very influential for students like Courtney and other potential group sojourners.

“Our division head for electronic media said something to me personally about it. He is from Germany originally and so he was saying that he was going to start up a program that was going to be over the summer and we would be able to take classes that also interested me. I was going to get to take classes for my major and go abroad.” (Courtney)

Universities have the opportunity to create a fostering environment for study abroad setting the stage for students to participate. Jake attends Centre College, a small liberal arts school, and explained that a study abroad experience was built into his college curriculum.

“It’s hard to describe, the whole atmosphere at Centre is that it’s expected basically. You hear about it through meetings, emails, advertisements, flyers, signs hanging everywhere. It’s a small school and everyone eats in one common dining area so there are big signs in there. We have a week-long orientation for freshmen and one of the biggest things they highlight is how strong the study abroad program is and how they expect all students to study abroad at some time or another.” (Jake)

Influences on the solo sojourner are harder to pinpoint than the group sojourner. Often they say they've "always known" they were going to study abroad. This desire lies deep within and is part of their identity. Most likely this development began in childhood and continued to progress through their life. John, a solo sojourner, was asked when he made the decision to go abroad:

"I think it's just part of my personality. It's been a kind of an assumption that I would study abroad; it was a questions of when and how." (John)

He went on to recall a memory of his childhood that remains with him today:

"When I was little, I remember when we were digging a hole and a friend said if you dig far enough, you'll end up in China. And I stopped and thought about it, that is so strange, there is someone on the other side of the world. You know, I had to ponder it for a while. Part of it is that superficial fascination. It's part of my personality to try new things that are different." (John)

Also classified as solo sojourners, Anne described knowing she had wanted to study abroad since she was a kid. When asked when she decided to go to Australia she replied:

"Since I was ten, I wanted to go there. It was my love for animals and the fact that they have kangaroos and koalas, they are so cute. My mom is a big animal lover too. I can remember looking in picture books at kangaroos and koalas and her saying... yeah, those are in Australia." (Anne)

Initiation

Students who participate in a study abroad programs exhibit high levels of initiation through the preparation process. Even with university led programs, students are required to obtain funding, apply for a passport and are often required to book their own travel arrangements. Practical matters such as obtaining medical insurance and dealing with their housing back home must be attended to.

The process of going abroad doesn't end after the student applies and is accepted to a program. For some, this is just the beginning. Solo sojourners are willing to make more sacrifices to go abroad. For Sue, her journey of preparing to go abroad lasted over a year. After researching and finding a program that suited her, she needed to obtain financial support to pay for the program and gain the approval for her program. Without financial support from her family, Sue's entire study abroad experience was funded through scholarships and grants. She began preparations for her second study abroad experience over a year before she departed. Sue described the lengthy process she went through before her departure persuading her department she should be granted permission:

"When I went to Mexico this fall, it was a big headache with CCM (College of Conservatory of Music), if you are going to graduate on time, there is a one credit piano class I have to take every quarter. They told me, you can't go because you are going to miss piano. I told them, I am pretty much ahead of where I need to be. I told them look, I am not going to not go somewhere for four months just so I can take a piano class once a week. There were some year long classes that I had to take my junior year instead of my senior year. It wasn't that hard to take the class but it was difficult to convince people, yes, I can take the class even though I'm not one year older. It was getting my class requirements in and a lot of people's first reaction was, it's just not going to work. It took a lot of convincing. You have to go through all the paperwork and bureaucracy."(Sue)

It is sometimes assumed American parents fund their children's study abroad trips. The experience can be expensive and can be perceived as only open to the wealthy. This was not the case for the majority of the students included in this study. Lindsey and Jessica were the only two students whose parents funded the entire experience, tuition, airfare, and spending money. Adam's and Anne's parents paid for their tuition but the students were expected to pay for airfare and spending money while abroad. Anne worked two jobs the summer before she went abroad to save money for the experience. When asked how her trip was funded, she replied:

"I worked about seventy or eighty hours all summer. I worked at Lone Star and also the ball park. I am a catering attendant for parties they have at the Red's

games. I paid for my plane ticket as well as other spending money. It cost a lot to even get over there to begin with. Passport, all the extra stuff.”(Anne)

Sue, Jake and Stephen applied for scholarships specifically to fund their study abroad experience or transferred scholarships they already had from their university. Don and Alex both worked and took out additional student loans. Alex spent just around \$12,000 on his experience abroad. He funded his trip through working part-time and taking out additional student loans. In one way or another eight out of the ten students interviewed were held accountable for funding their study abroad experiences. Obtaining funding for a semester abroad is no easy task for many and students show great levels of motivation and initiative when faced with the challenge of funding their experiences.

5.3 Motivations

The main focus of this research project has been to gain insight into the motivating factors that lead American undergraduate students to study abroad. Up until this point, students’ backgrounds, influences and mobility capital have been highlighted. All of these factors are important as student motivations cannot be fully understood without considering this type information. The findings regarding student motivations in this study were expected and unexpected all at the same time. The motivations of the solo sojourner, group sojourner, business and arts majors are surprisingly similar.

Murphy-Lejeune (2002) identified the main motivations of the European student as a desire to speak, live and experience foreignness. The SAEP, study abroad evaluation program (Carlson,1990) found the main motivation of American students to study abroad was fueled by a desire for a cross cultural experience, to improve language skills and to live in and make acquaintances with people from another country. With these finding as a base, I formulated the following hypothesis presented in chapter three:

The main motivating factor for American students to study abroad is a desire to experience something new, exciting and culturally different from what they are accustomed.

My hypothesis was inline with the finding of this research. Time after time, students pinpointed a desire to experience newness as their main motivating factor. New people, new places, and new things were the attractions for students to study abroad. This can be classified and understood as a form of consumption motivation.

When asked why she decided to study abroad, Lindsey answered:

“To see the world, to travel the world. Even though I only traveled to Europe. To meet new people and to experience another culture and to see the world through someone else’s eyes.” (Lindsey)

A desire to seek newness can be linked to the personality features of the students. When asked to describe her personality, Courtney revealed her attraction to new people and things and new experiences:

“Okay, well, I love to laugh, I love to smile. I am a people person. Being around people, doing new things, trying new things makes me happy. I don’t like to be sad or be around anything negative. I try to help volunteer and such.” (Courtney)

Although a desire to seek newness could potentially be quenched within the borders of the U.S. by moving or visiting another region of the country, students express an interest in experiencing a new culture and way of life. Courtney told about how she loves big cities and this was one of her attractions to London. She also shared the fact that she desired more than an American city could offer.

“I just felt like I needed to get out, no matter if I moved to New York or L.A., I know there are places in the States that are different but I just felt there are still American habits no matter where you go. I just wanted to get out of the element and see a different mind view and mindset, way of living, how people live, what they value and such. What else is out there. There is a whole world that people don’t think about all the possibilities there are. I thought it was the perfect chance to take it and I couldn’t imagine passing it up.” (Courtney)

When asked to name his three original objectives for going abroad, Don expressed similar desires to the others students:

“The main one was to have fun and second was to meet new people and learn different things. And then the third was to see Europe. I mean, Europe is a totally different place; there is a lot more culture, more landmarks. Before I went over, we were planning all the places we could go. We could go to Dublin; we could go to Prague, Naples. Obviously I was excited about that.” (Don)

Personal development

Personal development was the second most observed source of motivation among interviewees. Students formulated their desire for personal growth as getting to know themselves better, broadening their horizons, promoting change in their lives, and getting a new perspective on life. This can be classified as an investment motivation. Some students recognize study abroad can provide an opportunity for personal growth and development and view it as an opportunity to invest in themselves. These students understand the long-term impacts of study abroad. They have the ability to see beyond the immediate experience and look at their time abroad as something that will most likely impact their lives in the long term.

Jake defined his motives to study abroad as a needed life lesson important in personal development. When asked to expand on why he believed study abroad was an important experience, Jake answered:

“ I just think, just being accepted by another culture and learning about another culture and applying that to the way I think about I guess... my worldliness and the way I think about global politics and Americas role in the world today, lots of different things with our culture with relation to another culture.” (Jake)

When John began telling people he was going to leave to study in China, not everyone could understand his reasoning. When asked how he would respond to these types of reactions, John’s reply demonstrated his belief that international experiences can promote growth:

“Each culture has a lot of things that are beneficial and can help someone from a different culture. So I can learn all sorts of things from different cultures. Why would you deprive yourself of that? It’s kind of a close-minded, a bit arrogant

perspective to believe all we need in the world is in America. It is that kind of thinking that causes stagnation all over the world. We have to be open.”. (John)

Not all of the students recognized personal growth directly as a motivating factor or had personal investment motives but often reflected upon this aspect when asked if they had changed upon their returns.

Language learning and academic motives

Although previous studies have shown (Murphy-Lejeune 2002, Oppen, 1990) that the main reason American and European students study abroad is to increase their foreign language capacity, I formulated a hypothesis with a different view: Language learning is not a primary reason for the majority of American students who study abroad for short sojourns.

The hypothesis I presented and the findings of the research conducted were similar. In this study, language was not a key motivating factor for the majority of students. I would also argue foreign language will continue to become less of a motivating factor for students to study abroad for short sojourns. Unfortunately, it is my belief interest in foreign language study will continue to decrease in U.S. colleges. On the flip side, the future of study abroad is bright with expected increasing student participation with different types of students taking advantage of the opportunity.

For many students, foreign language learning was not a motivating factor at all. Choosing to travel to English speaking countries, it is easy to assume Jessica and Anne did not possess this form of motivation. Four of the ten students, Alex, Courtney, Thomas and Julie had never studied the native tongues of their host countries before departure. Some of these students took language classes while abroad but language was not their primary focus of study. Usually in the form of an introductory course, they were taught the basics of the native language and all other classes were taught in English. In summary, language was not a primary factor for six of the students choosing to study abroad.

Although it appears language is not the main reason for many students to study abroad, language learning will continue to be the main motivating factor for a segment of those who participate. John was the only student enrolled in an intensive language program and took only Mandarin classes. While in China, one of his main goals was to learn to speak the language. In many senses, John and his experience abroad differs greatly from the other students in this study. He expressed a wish to have been able to have stayed for a year but was only able to make a semester fit a possibility. He has many future plans for returning and continuing with this language studies.

The remaining three students progressed with their previous foreign language studies while abroad. Although it was not their sole area of study while overseas, Adam, Jake, and Robin expressed motivations to increase their language capacity. As previously mentioned, the solo sojourner is more likely to be motivated by the opportunity of language learning. Three out of the four students who identify language as a motivation were also classified as solo sojourners. When Jake was asked why he felt it was important to go to France to study French, he replied:

“The first hand experience, learning French out a text book you don’t learn how to curse people out, the slang words or how to actually order at a restaurant. You learn the strict, formal, what we know as a second hand observer of another culture rather than learning from the people who grew up in that culture. It was also really interesting to learn from the French their secondhand observations what about America. Just the exchange of ideas and belief. The exchange of ideas on a really personal level rather than learning about it from afar. You can’t get those experiences unless you go abroad.” (Jake)

Foreign language learning has been classified as an academic motive in this study although it can be linked to personal and professional motives as well. Other academic motives such as improving grades, exposure to new teaching methods, or a desire to be exposed to courses or subjects not offered at a home institution played little if no role in the students’ decision-making processes. When asked why she decided to travel outside of the U.S. for an education experience, Jessica offered similar replies to other students:

“I would just say that it was for the experience of being over there. I didn’t necessarily go for the academics but for the experience of another country and

being around different people. It's not so much for academic reasons as the whole experience itself.”(Jessica)

Professional Motivations

As outlined in chapter three, I presented the hypothesis: When making the decision to study abroad, students have professional motivations related to their future career, competitiveness and employability viewing study abroad as an investment in this aspect of their lives.

Surprised by my findings, this hypothesis proved to be completely off base. When students were questioned on their motives for going abroad, none of them named a professional objective. Through the data collected, it can be assumed American students do not consider their future career when making the decision to study abroad for short sojourns. It can be concluded that in this case, student motivations for travel abroad are not considered as investments in their professional lives.

Don, a business major, made no mention of having professional motives when asked why he went abroad although during the interview he referred to himself as a determined, business-minded person. Surprised he did not speak of advancing his career or other professional motives when talking about why he for traveled to Austria, I began to probe deeper. When questioned if he had professional motives for going abroad, his reply was not expected:

“No, I mean, for me, it was more of, like when my brother came back people and friends came up to me and asked, what happened to your brother, he changed. I knew he changed. I could see how. When I talked to him, I could understand the reasoning. When I went there it wasn't because it would look good on my resume. I didn't want to go abroad to build a resume, I wanted to go abroad to do something totally different. I wanted to go abroad not really because I was bored but I had been working in the same place and when it ended, I was ready for something new. I was like, let's go to Austria and see what happens.” (Don)

When further questioned, several students said they began to realize how their career could be impacted once they were abroad but had not considered it before they left. John went abroad without any preconceived professional motives or the vision of his

career path or how his international experience could be utilized. However these ideas began to change once he was in China. John was asked if he had any professional motives when making the decision to go abroad and he responded:

“No actually, I had no intention of any sort of business career or something before I went. But when I got there I began to understand the people there and their business work and especially international business. I realized I need to work in business to understand the people. Then I began to think about my resume and all of these sorts of things. But on the onset, I was just focused on understanding the language and the people.”(John)

Many students realize they learned a great deal abroad that can be used positively in the work force. This realization is often made after completing the program and upon return. Lindsey, an international relations major, did not link her motivations for going abroad with her future career. On the surface, it would be easy to assume that a student like Lindsey is hoping to become more competitive in the workforce increasing her marketability by gaining international experiences but she described something very different when asked if she had professional motives:

“For me, it was personal. Having a point on my resume wasn’t part of it. I don’t do things based on, oh, that is going to look good on my resume. A lot of people do but that doesn’t drive me. Looking back on it, it looks great.” (Lindsey)

Some students do not fully realize the potentially positive effects study abroad can have in their professional lives. Jake had never even considered his time overseas in relation to his future career:

“I do a lot of things that will look good on my resume but it never really crossed my mind with study abroad. In fact, it’s not even on my resume, perhaps I should put it on there.” (Jake)

Now that the data has presented, the next chapter will focus on summarizing and reflections on the findings obtained during the interviews conducted.

6 Looking Toward the Future

6.1 Reflections

This study found the participants' main motivating factors to study abroad can be linked to a desire to seek newness. The attractions to newness could be experienced through exposure to different cultures, the creation of new relationships, or seeing new parts of the world. This aspect of student motivation would best fall under the category of consumption motivations.

Consumption motivations weren't the only driving force exhibited by students when speaking of their decision-making processes. Participants also expressed a desire to experience personal growth. Viewing that a chance to learn more about themselves as a person, their own society and other cultures, some students realized study abroad was an opportunity that could foster this type of change. Self growth could be considered an investment motive with a vision for the future, not just one for the short term.

It could be assumed many students possess both consumption and investment motives when choosing to study abroad. In this case, the investment mode seemed to be more personal than financial as professional motives were not identified by students as a motivating factor. Many of the participants were able to reflect on their way in which their professional lives could be impacted by their sojourns but claimed this was out of consequence, not intention. Perhaps this is not the case for other students; perhaps those in different regions of the country or from other types of institutions but in this case, it appears students were not thinking of advancing their careers during the initial process of deciding to go abroad. Even the students who completed internships abroad in their desired fields of work continually focused on how they wanted to travel to new places not increase their employability.

In what is often referred to as an "ever" increasingly competitive work force, it was interesting to find some of the students interviewed had never considered their time overseas as an experience that could set them apart from others in the workforce. Often aware of the personal benefits, professional benefits were harder to realize for a few students. The filter theory presented in chapter three could be used to argue the purpose

of study abroad is to sort out students who have the capability of functioning within an international environment. It was obvious throughout the interviews students did not view study abroad as a mechanism to be used to distinguish themselves from others.

Students themselves must view and acknowledge study abroad as a way to signal their levels of productivity to future employers, or the filter fails. Unless the act of studying abroad is viewed as a filter by those who participate, it could be argued the message never makes it to the employer and it thus incapable of functioning correctly. I would argue that in time and as international experience becomes increasingly valued in American society, students will begin to realize the study abroad as a mechanism for the advancement of their professional lives.

U.S. Congress expressed a pressing desire to dramatically increase outbound mobility for American students. If the vision of the Commission of the Abraham Lincoln Fellowship program, the committee who made recommendations for a national program to promote and assist study abroad, begins to be implemented and is effective in increasing participation in study abroad, the act itself will become more common. Some institutions have taken progressive stands changing degree requirements to include study abroad. Goucher College, located in Baltimore, is a school that should be regarded for its international vision by mandating all students participate in an overseas educational experience. Supported with a \$1,200 travel voucher, study abroad is not an option for students at this school. Other institutions such as Harvard have also expressed plans to make similar changes. Goucher College and other higher education institutions taking an active and aggressive stance on increasing the international capabilities of their students serve as leaders and catalysts in the beginning of the massification process of study abroad.

As study abroad begins to massify the face of study abroad students will change just as the types of students enrolled in college changed with the massification of higher education. As higher education institutions continue to be challenged with educating large and diverse populations, study abroad programs could face similar issues. Already moving away from the typical sophomore year spent abroad, the types of programs offered, their aims and the students they attract, will change.

For the students in this study, foreign language study was not a motivating factor for the majority. It could be assumed a segment of students who take part in short-term

sojourns, especially those classified as group sojourners, also do not have language motives to going abroad. Unless there is a change in the interest in foreign language study in America, I believe the aim of study abroad will continue to become less about learning a language. For some students, especially solo sojourners, language will continue to be a driving force. It could be assumed this group of students will continue to represent a small segment of the students who study abroad as participation increases.

6.2 Implications

When attempting to wrap up and conclude any type of research project, a question that will inevitably be asked is, what does it all mean? What can be taken away from the research? The aim of this research project has been to identify the main motivating factors that lead American undergraduates to participate in a study abroad, however an underlying intention was the hope to be able to utilize the findings as a tool to motivate more undergraduates to participate. Although the goal of qualitative research is not to make generalizations, there are lessons we can take from the small group of students who participated in this study. The data can be useful in providing new ways to relate students and study abroad.

As mentioned, there are universities taking bold steps to increase study abroad participation. These institutions are unique and currently represent a tiny segment of the total number of Americans enrolled in higher education. If the goals outlined by Congress to have one million students study abroad within ten years, institutions across America are going to need to make changes. Higher education institutions are responsible for increasing the global competence of its students and study abroad is considered the most effective way to do this. Using the findings from this study coupled with my personal experience I will make recommendations on how higher education institutions can potentially recruit students in a more effective way.

- Study abroad can no longer be a self-selecting process; higher education institutions and educators need to take an active role in the recruitment process, making personal attempts to present opportunities to students.

- Students with open, outgoing and extroverted personalities should be targeted as they possess an aspect of mobility capital that may make them more willing to partake in international travel.

Students can also play an active role in the recruitment process as they can be very influential for certain students, especially those classified as group sojourners.

- Returnees should be used in the promotion of study abroad when possible. Their experiences can start the ripple effect of excitement becoming “contagious” to other students.
- When a student applies for a study abroad program, he/she should be asked to refer other students they believe to be good candidates for the experience and an attempt should be made to recruit these students.

For some students, the decision to go abroad is made when they reach college. Higher education institutions have the opportunity to directly expose students to study abroad opportunities acting as a positive influence. As distinguished in chapter two, lack of information serves as a barrier for many students. The only way to break down this barrier is to get information out there for students. The process of exposing students to international opportunities should begin the day a student’s college journey starts being reinforced each year.

It is important to think of new and creative ways to reach students who may not typically be interested in leaving the country. It seems the investment aspect of study abroad that is often the most used to promote study abroad to students is heavy with investment modes. The consumption aspect of study abroad should also be used as a marketing and promotion tool. A balance for investment (self growth, language learning, and increased professional marketability) should be highlighted together with consumption motivations (the experience of new people, land and culture). Study abroad should be marketed as an exciting cultural experience providing an opportunity to travel to new lands, meet interesting people, and see new places and experience different cultures not just a chance to be immersed in a language or as a way

to build a resume.

The discussion on promoting study abroad in new ways is not meant to simplify the issue. Better methods of promoting study abroad will only help the issue on the surface. In order to vastly increase the number of students who study abroad, institutions must work to remove barriers blocking students from participation.

As highlighted in chapter one, the main deterrent for American students to study abroad, are costs. Already bearing the burden of tuition fees, many American students require financial support in order to go abroad in the same way they require assistance to be able to attend higher education in the first place. The creation of the bi-partisan Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship program is an important step for the future of study abroad in America. It is my hope federal funding will support the proposed program and help break down this barrier of assisting students financially. Moving beyond finances, below are recommendations that could change barriers at the institutional level:

- Adjust current procedures allowing for flexibility with credit transfers from foreign schools.
- Create fostering environments where study abroad is encouraged not discouraged.
- Adjust curricula to require courses where students gain knowledge of other regions and cultures.
- Include current events into curricula emphasizing awareness of world issues.
- Create opportunities within curricula that provide opportunities to go abroad.
- Provide scholarship opportunities for students with internationally focused majors and desires to study and or work abroad.

We have much to learn from students who have participated in study abroad programs that could be utilized to motivate more students to take the initiative and go abroad. It is my hope further studies of students will continue to emerge shedding light on study abroad experiences as a phenomenon that needs to be better understood.

There is a great opportunity for America as a nation to improve its way of communicating and working with the nations of the world. The best way to build bridges, alliances and cooperation is through mutual understanding. Study abroad can serve this purpose by exposing otherwise mono-cultural American students to the world outside. As our future leaders, business people, doctors, educators, and politicians, today's students will be better equipped to serve the American public as globally aware citizens. Motivating and supporting American students to go abroad is a worthy cause and can no longer consist of less than five percent of the population. There is a need to bring study abroad to the masses and this can be accomplished by breaking down barriers with the support of the federal government and by the higher educational institutions committed to change.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide:

Personal and Family background, previous experience of mobility& language

Please describe your personality.

What do you think makes you unique?

Do you consider yourself politically active?

Do you vote?

Tell me about the town where you grew up:

Did your family ever move to new towns or did you ever change school systems?

How would you characterize your family's heritage?

Do you have any family members who currently live outside of America?

Is anyone in your family bi-lingual?

Do you speak another language? How would you rate your proficiency?

Do you think it's important for Americans to learn to speak other languages? Why?

When were you first exposed to foreign languages?

Tell me about your family vacations:

What type of travel do you enjoy?

Before your study abroad experience, had you traveled outside of the States?

Describe your ultimate dream vacation, if money and time were not an issue:

Initiation, Motivations, Influences and Barriers

Please tell me why you decided to study abroad:

Why did you pick to study in _____?

When would you say did you decided you would go abroad? Was it in elementary school, high school, or college?

Is there anyone in particular who you would say influenced your decision?

Was there a defining moment or incident you remember that led you to this decision?

How did your friends and family feel about your decision?

How did you hear about the specific study abroad program you participated in?

How is study abroad promoted on your campus?

Tell me about the support you received through the application process.

Do you feel there was enough information and support provided to you throughout the process from your school?

Did you ever feel any hesitations from others about leaving for a whole semester?

Can you tell me a little about the program? How many students participated; were all the students there from your school? Who conducted classes?

Was there much diversity in the group? What were they were studying, (background, etc)?

Did you study abroad with any friends you knew before you left?

Were any of your friends studying abroad in a different country the same time you were?

Out of your circle of friends, how many have or will study abroad?

How was your trip financed?

What were the costs?

Was this a barrier for you?

Did you apply for funding through your school, the government or other sources to help support your trip? Did you apply for scholarships?

Was there anything that almost prevented you from this experience?

Did you find it difficult to transfer credits?

Did your international experience affect your graduation date?

Could you summarize, under three headings, your original objectives to study abroad?

Do you think these objectives you just mentioned are personally, academically or professionally motivated?

Tell me more about your personal motives:

Tell me about your professional motives:

Tell me about your academic motives:

What percent of American college students do you think study abroad?

Less than one percent of American undergraduate students study abroad. Why do you think this is?

Do you think it's important for Americans to have an international educational experience? Why?

What did you want to accomplish during your time away?

If you had the option, would you study abroad again?

Will your future travels be international?

How have you changed since returning from your study abroad experience?

Appendix B

Name: _____

Age: _____

Gender: _____

Race: _____

Type of Study Abroad Program you participated in:

Host Country: _____

Length of time spent abroad: _____

I am available: _____

Appendix C

Pre-Interview Questionnaire

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Race:

University or college where you are currently enrolled:

Your year in school (ex: freshman, sophomore):

Major:

Host country where you studied:

Type of study abroad program you participated in:

Did you receive college credit for your time abroad?

How much time did you spend abroad?

How was your experience abroad funded?

Number of siblings in your family:

Ages of siblings:

Highest level of education completed by parents:

Occupations of parents:

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